

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
**Department of Health Services**



GRAY DAVIS  
Governor

June 18, 2003

TO: All Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS)

In March of this year, I accepted the position of Registration Program Administrator. Contrary to several rumors the REHS program is still alive and well and an important component of the Department of Health Services (DHS) for the State of California. Deann Kanenaga and Doug Turner continue to provide valuable support for the program. Deann has worked in the program three years and is very knowledgeable on the application and registration process. Doug has returned as a retired annuitant and provides continuity and a wealth of registration experience from his prior 19 years as program administrator. We are working hard to process applications, maintain the registration examination, and enhance the profession.

This year we have been very active in a variety of issues fundamental to the continued excellence of environmental health professionals. California has the most stringent educational, direct training, and experience requirements within the nation. Our current examination process is more comprehensive than any state or national exam.

Currently, we are involved with several projects that may be of interest to you. These include the revalidation of the REHS exam, the development of training guidelines, a review of university programs offering a degree in environmental health, revising the REHS web page, working with stakeholders on a strategic plan for the REHS Program, and preparing for an office move. The Department recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Cooperative Personnel Services to evaluate the educational requirements of the applicants. This will free up a considerable amount of my time to facilitate implementation of the strategic plan goals.

1. **Revalidate REHS Exam:** We are working with the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee, County Training Officers, California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health, California Environmental Health Association, Cooperative Personnel Services, and other interested parties to revalidate the REHS exam. The exam revalidation project will require that we conduct an occupational analysis of the profession and identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) that are required for an entry level environmental health



Do your part to help California save energy. To learn more about saving energy, visit the following web site:  
[www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html](http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html)

specialist. The environmental health specialist profession has changed dramatically since the last occupational analysis was completed in 1992. With new or increased emphasis placed on hazardous materials, beach safety, bioterrorism, medical wastes, mold, and infectious diseases there is a need to review the examination to ensure that it adequately addresses these areas. The reliability of the REHS examination is of great importance to the environmental health field since it serves as the final exam for candidates prior to the issuance of their registration as environmental health specialists.

So far, job audits have been performed in southern and northern California and a panel was convened in the south to identify the tasks required for an REHS. In July the northern panel will convene to identify KSAs needed to perform the tasks identified in the first panel. A questionnaire will be designed to allow participants to rate each task and KSA as to their importance, frequency, and if these tasks and KSAs are needed at the time of registration. Finally, the questionnaire will be sent out to a representative sample of REHSs within the state. Results from the questionnaire will be used to develop a test plan for revising the exam as well as providing us a detailed job description that can be used to promote the profession at universities and to recruit qualified individuals.

2. **Training Plan Guidance:** We drafted a checklist for counties to use to self-evaluate their existing training programs. A process is being developed with the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Training Subcommittee to evaluate all the training plans currently on file with the Department. We have also developed a training plan for the State in order to accommodate state employees that want to become registered while continuing their employment with DHS or another state agency. We are also working to strengthen the network of training coordinators throughout the state. This will enable us to improve training programs for the trainees and help us to evaluate other training needs. We hope to meet with the training coordinators on a regular basis to exchange ideas and work on training issues.

3. **University Review:** We recently met with the Environmental Health Specialist Registration Committee's Education Subcommittee to plan our next university environmental health program review. Doug Turner attended this meeting and provided continuity in the university review process. We plan to start the university reviews with California State University at San Bernardino in October (when school is back in session). The university review process involves a school site visit to evaluate facilities including the libraries, classrooms, and laboratories. We will discuss the program elements with environmental health professors, school administrators, and students. We have two new universities offering environmental health curriculum. California State University, Los Angeles and California State University, Fullerton have received approval from DHS to allow a graduate to qualify for option III or IV.

4. **New Web Design:** A new look for the web site is currently under construction. At our new site you will be able to find topics you are interested in by skimming the left hand column. There will also be a "What's New?" category where updates like this will be posted. Some delays on the development have been encountered because of our scheduled move to the East End Office Complex. For now the easiest way to reach our site is by going to [www.dhs.ca.gov](http://www.dhs.ca.gov); click on Services in the left-hand column; REHS site is the second bullet when the page opens.

5. **Strategic Plan:** A copy of the draft strategic plan is now available for your review on the DHS web page. We welcome comments on the draft strategic plan. You can download a copy of the complete document from our web site. It contains the five strategic initiatives as well as the survey information from the general REHS population. Although this process has been the source of some anxiety within the REHS community, it is essential to participate in the process. We hope that all the stakeholders can work together to implement the plan.

6. **Office Relocation:** On August 1, 2003, we are moving to the East End Office Complex located at 1616 Capital Mall in Sacramento. This new complex will serve as the headquarters for DHS. Our post office box will not change but we will have a new telephone number. Please check our web site for the new office information and excuse any lapse in communications on the day of the move. Remember we have a test July 18! The November exam for northern California will be held in our new office.

We hope that this information is useful to you regarding the current operations of the REHS Program. Please feel free to call me (916) 324-2211 or Deann Kanenaga (916) 324-9533 with specific concerns. We can also be reached via email: [mblood@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:mblood@dhs.ca.gov) or [dkanenag@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:dkanenag@dhs.ca.gov). We trust this finds you well and ready for a renewed commitment to the REHS profession.

Sincerely,

Margaret Blood, REHS  
Environmental Health Specialist Registration Program